

## News release

### For immediate release

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### **Women continue to struggle against long-held and systemic entry barriers into elected office**

- ▶ **Survey shows gendered roles and expectations continue to hold back female legislators, unlike male counterparts, capping success and stunting ambitions**
- ▶ **Female politicians receive fewer private donations on average than their male counterparts, and rely relatively more on party sponsorship and support**
- ▶ **Media portrayal and voter perceptions of "the woman's place" seem to cast a longer shadow over female politicians' decisions about whether or not to run for office**

*DAVOS, SWITZERLAND. 21 JANUARY 2015.* Women remain significantly underrepresented in politically elected positions across most developed and developing countries, as well as similarly underrepresented in senior ministerial posts, according to a joint study by the World Bank and the Women in Parliaments Global Forum (WIP), supported by EY.

The study, [\*The Female Political Career\*](#), reflects survey results from male and female national political representatives across 84 countries around the world designed to understand the hurdles women face in launching and sustaining successful political careers.

The findings of the study highlight that because of gendered social roles and social expectations, the pool of female political candidates is inherently smaller than male candidates even before an election begins. Because of this overarching factor alone, women face an uphill climb toward equality in politics from the very first obstacle. Once in office, female legislators are more likely to continue to face gendered roles and expectations, capping ambitions as surely as limiting their success. While many current female legislators nevertheless prevail

against these headwinds, the majority of parliaments considered in this study are far from being equally represented by both sexes.

Nayé A. Bathily, Head of the Global Parliamentary Unit, External and Corporate Relations of the World Bank, says:

“This study provides an original survey to learn about the barriers that women face on the road to a career in politics. In collaboration with academic partners from leading research universities, this study represents a major advance in global knowledge on this critical front. The data distilled in this report casts an important light on the nature of the constraints women continue to face globally to enter the male-dominated world of politics.”

Uschi Schreiber, EY’s Global Vice Chair for Markets, says:

“The lack of female representation in our national legislatures, and in ministerial positions, matters as much as in the corporate boardroom. Research supports the view that the presence of women in public life, including on the political stage, makes a real difference. Women are more likely to act in a bipartisan manner and are more likely to surface new ideas and bring new issues to the policy table. Increasing diversity in our parliaments can have a positive impact on government transparency and result in policy outcomes more inclusive of the whole population.”

Silvana Koch-Mehrin, Founder, Women in Parliaments Global Forum, says:

“Formal barriers to women participation in politics are nowadays almost non-existent around the world. However, a glass ceiling remains. The results of this first study tell the same old story. Family commitments still constitute a major source of concern for women. Moreover, women and men also have systematically different levels and types of networks of political support. Despite recent progress, the glass ceiling remains. There might be some cracks, but it still needs to be shattered.”

**Key findings of the study (by Frances Rosenbluth, Yale University; Joshua Kalla, UC Berkeley; and Dawn Teele, The London School of Economics) include:**

- ▶ Reflecting continuing effects of family roles, female politicians tend to start their careers later, have fewer children, spend more time caring for their families and arrange their lives to have shorter commuting times than their male counterparts.

- ▶ It appears that only females with supportive families run for office, whereas men are more likely to run for office in spite of discouragement from their families.
- ▶ Female and male politicians have systematically different levels and types of political support networks. Female politicians receive fewer private donations on average than their male counterparts, and rely relatively more on party sponsorship and support.
- ▶ Media portrayal and voter perceptions of “the woman’s place” seem to cast a longer shadow over female politicians’ decisions about whether or not to run for office and their decisions to pursue higher office.
- ▶ While both men and women express concern about the many pitfalls of political campaigning, females are more worried overall, particularly about gender discrimination, the difficulty of fundraising, negative advertising, the loss of privacy and not being taken seriously.
- ▶ Considerably more men hold ministerial positions in their sites whereas women seem to settle for lesser levels of advancement.

The report underscores an emerging global consensus around the importance of gender equality in all spheres of life, including political representation and leadership in business. The failure of national legislatures to reflect their populations is a sign of entry barriers, and deprives societies of female political talent. Although some countries employ quotas to hasten representational equality, women still occupy only 20% of lower-level parliamentary seats, on average, internationally.

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#### **Notes to Editors**

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##### **About Women in Parliaments Global Forum**

The Women in Parliaments Global Forum (WIP) is the global network of female Parliamentarians at national level, including the European Parliament, of whom there currently are around 9,000.

WIP is an independent, international and post-partisan foundation established with the purpose of advancing society by building a network between Women in Parliaments. It is a not-for-profit foundation, based in Zurich, Switzerland. WIP members are Members of Parliaments at national level, including those directly elected to the European Parliament.

### **About the report**

This report reflects survey results from 84 countries around the world designed to understand the hurdles women face in launching and sustaining successful political careers. The responses drawn on in this report come from two different waves of questions.

In the first wave a set of voluntary respondents (male and female) was invited to participate in an online survey from July 2014-September 2014. The original database consisted in 8,204 valid individual emails of legislators from 26 countries. The email addresses were obtained in different ways. Sometimes the national legislature publishes a list of emails and addresses for all of its MPs. In other cases, there was a consistent pattern of address that, once discovered, could be used to construct emails for a list of MPs. At other times individual MPs would post their email addresses on their websites. Each of these methods was employed to the degree necessary.

A second wave of the survey was meant to reach out to specifically to female legislators using the Women in Parliaments database. This database included female legislators from 70 countries. In this round women were specifically asked to weigh-in on the questions in light of the motivating force behind the project, namely, understanding the barriers to careers in politics for women.

Total respondents included 339 male and 278 female parliamentarians from 84 countries. The countries represented included: Afghanistan, Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belgium, Bhutan, Burundi, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Denmark, Dominica, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, France, Gabon, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, India, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Korea (Republic of), Latvia, Liberia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Namibia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Russia, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Sudan, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uruguay, and Zimbabwe.